



MEDIA ADVISORY

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 16, 2014

FURTHER INFORMATION
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STATEMENT ON APPOINTMENT EXPIRATION OF 121 PROBATIONARY POSITIONS

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is in the early phases of creating a 21st Century Family Assistance Service Delivery Model representing a transformational change for the department. This transformational change represents a shift in the business/customer service delivery model.

The focus is to re-engineer how Tennessee Family Assistance (SNAP & TANF) services are provided by DHS. It further reinforces our vision of partnering with customers to provide temporary assistance in their journey toward establishing or reestablishing self-sufficiency to create a better quality of life. We believe client engagement and accountability is an important part of the relationship. The following outlines some of the business drivers that form the basis for transforming the current service delivery model: complicated eligibility process; customer wait times; redundant and duplicative processes; and a history of creating rules and policies that are more restrictive than federal regulation, which reduced agility and increased workload for staff. These are some of the longstanding and entrenched practices we have identified through an ongoing analysis that need to be addressed. These practices place the state at risk for audit findings, penalties, and customer service challenges.

Family Assistance staff at all levels from across the state have been involved in the development of the new service delivery model. They have been excited and amazed at the possibilities that are being realized largely driven by their involvement. We have also received positive feedback from customers. The strategy for transformation consists of 4 key components: Business process reengineering; Workload Analysis; Modernization; and as mentioned before, Multilevel Employment Engagement. These strategies will result in improved accuracy, timeliness, staff and organizational performance, workload balance for staff, customer service, fiscal stewardship and an increased sense of efficacy for employees.

Effective January 2014, the DHS role with TennCare (Medicaid Eligibility) shifted to more of a supportive role. TennCare now has the lead role. DHS serves as a point of access and provides technical/navigational assistance for the application process. The change with TennCare resulted in a decrease in the DHS Medicaid Eligibility caseload of more than 1 million individuals. This caseload is now handled by TennCare. As a part of this transition in FY 2014, the department eliminated 256 vacant positions. The DHS Family Assistance division has continued to operate effectively after this reduction in workforce positions which concluded in April 2014. The elimination of probationary positions was the next area of focus. After review and analysis, the department eliminated 121 probationary positions on June 13, 2014. It should be noted, that probationary employees (less than 12 months of service in a position)

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were notified of the ending of their service with an additional 10 days paid, as well as payment for any accrued annual or compensation leave. These individuals do maintain their eligibility for rehire in other positions at DHS and other state departments. This reduction impacted 46 out of 95 counties. We are also continuing to experience a decreasing trend in caseloads for SNAP and TANF.

The department is doing continued analysis on workload and workforce needs. While the department does expect to do additional position reductions, we do not yet know the exact number, classification, or location in the state. As in the case with the 256 vacant positions eliminated in FY 2014, we will maintain a focus on vacant positions as a part of this process. At this point, we do not know the extent to which employees may be impacted. We are mindful of the potential impact on employees and intend to keep employees informed throughout the process so they too can plan accordingly.

DHS will be able to share more details in the coming months; we have no additional information at this time.

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